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## **Music Saves Cleveland ... And It's Helping the Neighborhood Too!**

“We believe the love of great music and the lifestyle that it contributes to is akin to participation in a religion,” says Melanie Hershberger, a local entrepreneur. “Music is what inspires us. It’s what gets us through the day. We think a lot of other people feel this way, too.”

That is the foundation on which the entrepreneurial dream of Melanie and Kevin Hershberger is built. Their store, Music Saves, recently opened in North Collinwood, in the Waterloo business district, just a few storefronts away from the now famous music venue, the Beachland Ballroom. Melanie and Kevin began their relationship, and their dream to become entrepreneurs while working as DJs at their alma mater, Bowling Green State University’s radio station. They knew that their dream would not just happen. Early on they realized that personal sacrifice, hard work and perseverance would be necessary to make their dream happen. They also knew that they couldn’t go it completely alone.

Northeast Shores Development Corporation (NSDC), the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), SBA micro lender WECO, SCORE and Sky Bank all worked together to help Melanie and Kevin make Music Saves a reality. “Music Saves is the perfect addition to this neighborhood,” according to Brian Friedman, Executive Director of NSDC. “The mantra of Downtown Waterloo development is ‘good eats, good vibes’ and Music Saves fits right into our mission of creating a relaxed and inviting entertainment district” added Friedman.

Music Saves is an intimate, inviting, and hip enclave of music focusing on independent label music which often gets overlooked by the “big box” stores. Beyond new and used CDs, Music Saves is amassing a respectable cache of vinyl records which continues to experience a comeback to the tune of a 300 percent increase in sales since 2000.

Melanie took an evening job delivering pizzas about a year ago prior to the opening of Music Saves in July. This allowed her to utilize daytime hours to aggressively pursue the help she needed. All of her hard work and persistence paid off. “I could not have opened a record store in under a year without the help and support of the SBA, the WECO Fund, Northeast Shores Development Corporation, the folks at the Beachland Ballroom, and my family and friends,” said Melanie.

Getting opened was the first major entrepreneurial challenge overcome by Melanie and Kevin, and they are now focused on developing new ideas for business growth, which include development of a website and possible expansion of store hours. They have faith that new customers will continue to discover them and their mantra, MUSIC SAVES!